

# Hippopotamus

SPECIES • *Hippopotamus amphibius*

### VITAL STATISTICS

WEIGHT	655–3200kg (1444–7054lb)
LENGTH	335–564cm (132–222in), including tail; up to 165cm (65in) tall
SEXUAL MATURITY	Females 4–10 years; males 7–12 years
GESTATION PERIOD	About 248 days; weaning occurs 6–8 months later
NUMBER OF OFFSPRING	1
DIET	Herbivorous, grazing on grass under cover of darkness
LIFESPAN	Typically 30–40 years, but can be up to 50

There is no mistaking the appearance of the hippopotamus. The broad head allows it to wallow with its eyes and nostrils above the surface of the water.



### WHERE IN THE WORLD?



Occurs in Africa, south of the Sahara, usually close to watercourses such as rivers and lakes. Absent from the south of the continent.

#### SKIN

There are mucous glands on the surface of the skin, which secrete a reddish fluid.

#### BODY

The body is large and barrel-shaped, mostly free from hair.



#### LEGS

The legs are short but powerful, allowing the hippopotamus to run quickly on land, and swim well.

#### NOSTRILS

The nostrils are relatively big, but the hippopotamus closes the openings with skin flaps when it is submerged.

#### HITCHING A RIDE

Young hippopotamuses in a group may rest on their mothers' shoulders, where the water is too deep for them to stand.

### HOW BIG IS IT?



Hippos have a very wide gape

# Duck-Billed Platypus

SPECIES • *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*

### VITAL STATISTICS

WEIGHT	0.7–2.4kg (1.5–5.3lb); males are larger
LENGTH	43–50cm (43–50in)
SEXUAL MATURITY	2 years
GESTATION PERIOD	Eggs develop in the body for 28 days, and are then incubated for 10 days
NUMBER OF OFFSPRING	1–3, emerging from their nesting burrow at around 4 months old
DIET	Insectivorous, typically feeding on worms, shrimps and crayfish
LIFESPAN	Up to 11 years; 17 in captivity

When this species first became known Europe in 1798, its appearance was considered so bizarre it was thought to be a hoax.



### WHERE IN THE WORLD?



Restricted to Australia, occurring along suitable watercourses in the east of the continent, ranging from eastern Queensland south to Victoria; also present on Tasmania.

### ANIMAL FACTS

One of the things that makes the duck-billed platypus so unusual is the fact that it is an egg-laying mammal. It was not until almost a century after its discovery that its method of reproduction was confirmed. Another oddity of this species is the way in which it locates its prey underwater by means of electroreception. It also has sensory receptors in its bill, but the electroreceptors confirm the presence of living prey.



#### BILL

Rubbery in texture, the bill is used for digging underwater to find food.

#### DENSE FUR

This traps air next to the body, keeping the platypus warm.

#### TAIL

Broad and flat, the tail helps the platypus steer itself underwater.

### BREEDING BIOLOGY

The female incubates the eggs by curling around them. The young are blind and hairless when they hatch.

### HOW BIG IS IT?



The front claws are covered with webbing